

COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Policy and Procedure Manual

NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS

Approved By: Kenneth Burton Chief of Police
CALEA 6th Edition Standard:

346 NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS

346.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for media releases and media access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies and other law enforcement activities.

346.2.1 MEDIA REQUEST

Any media request for information or access to a law enforcement situation shall be referred to the designated department media representative, or if unavailable, to the first available supervisor. Prior to releasing any information to the media, members shall consider the following:

1. At no time shall any member of this department make any comment or release any official information to the media without prior approval from a supervisor or the designated department media representative.
2. In situations involving multiple law enforcement agencies or other criminal justice agencies including, but not limited to, prosecutors and coroners, every reasonable effort should be made to coordinate media releases with the authorized representative of each involved agency prior to the release of any information by this department.
3. Members of this department should not make any comments to the media regarding any law enforcement incident not involving this department without prior approval of the Chief of Police.

346.3 MEDIA ACCESS

Authorized members of the media should be provided reasonable access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies and other law enforcement activities. Access by the media is subject to the following conditions:

- a) The media representative shall produce valid press credentials that shall be prominently displayed at all times while in areas otherwise closed to the public.
- b) Media representatives may be prevented from interfering with emergency operations and criminal investigations.
 - 1) Reasonable effort should be made to provide a safe staging area for the media that is near the incident and that will not interfere with emergency or criminal investigation operations. All information released to the media should be coordinated through the Public Information Officer or other designated spokesperson.
- c) No member of this department who is under investigation shall be required to submit to media visits or interviews without the consent of the involved member.

A tactical operation should be handled in the same manner as a crime scene, subject to any restrictions as determined by the supervisor in charge. Department members shall not jeopardize a tactical operation in

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order to accommodate the news media. All comments to the media shall be coordinated through a supervisor or the Public Information Officer.

346.3.1 PROVIDING ADVANCE INFORMATION

To protect the safety and rights of officers and other persons, advance information about planned actions by law enforcement personnel, such as movement of persons in custody or the execution of an arrest or search warrant, should not be disclosed to the news media nor should media representatives be invited to be present at such actions except with the prior approval of the Chief of Police.

346.4 INFORMATION SUBJECT TO RELEASE

The Department will maintain a daily information log of significant law enforcement activities that shall be made available, upon request, to media representatives through the Watch Commander.

Identifying information concerning deceased individuals should only be released to the media when the decedent's identity has been verified, the decedent's family has been notified when feasible and the release is approved by a supervisor.

Any requests for copies of related reports or additional information not contained in this log shall be referred to the designated media representative, the custodian of records, or if unavailable, to the Watch Commander. Such requests will be processed in accordance with policy and state law.

346.4.1 STATE RESTRICTED INFORMATION

It shall be the responsibility of the authorized members dealing with media requests to ensure that restricted information is not inappropriately released to the media... Examples of such restricted information may include, but are not limited to:

1. The identities of involved officers when the release hinders a law enforcement purpose or reveals the identity of an undercover peace officer and as otherwise required by law (§ 610.100.3, RSMo).
2. Information that would tend to endanger the safety of any individual or jeopardize the successful completion of any ongoing investigation (§ 610.100.2, RSMo). Information pertaining to pending litigation involving this department (§ 610.021(1), RSMo).
3. Any information that is otherwise privileged or restricted under state or federal law.